

# RURAL PROGRESS CARAVAN REPORT

Assembled by Caravan Committee

George Amundson, Chairman

Miss R. Markwell, C. V. Ballard, J. G. Hays, and J. M. Moore

Michigan State College of Agriculture

## ORGANIZATION AND PLAN

The idea of a traveling Caravan to feature either labor-saving devices or farm structures, was proposed and discussed by the Agricultural Engineering Department with the extension director and county agent leader in August of 1945. After a thorough discussion, it was decided to feature "Labor Saving" as most timely and appropriate this year.

The extra financing, essential to carrying on this project, was provided by the Emergency Farm Labor Department. Originally, EFL agreed to finance the building and preparation of the Caravan providing the Extension Department would assure that the project would be carried through, if EFL funds were not available after January 1, 1946. As it worked out, EFL provided most of the extra financing, except for the time and travel of the regular specialists, and in addition assigned Mr. J. G. Hays to help in the preparation of the Caravan. The final appearance and material on the panels reflected largely Mr. Hays' efforts. EFL also assigned Mrs. Shinkus to the home economics exhibit and Mr. Albert Festerling to help demonstrate and explain some of the labor-saving devices, and both did outstanding jobs.

Several meetings were held in October and November with the project leaders, where the general plan was explained and cooperation solicited from all departments for material and suggestions for models, displays, and ideas which would fit and help develop the general theme of "Rural Progress Through Labor Saving."

Mr. Amundson had general charge, and had the very effective help of a committee composed of Mr. Ballard, county agent leader, A. B. Love, State emergency farm labor supervisor, and J. G. Hays, assistant State emergency farm labor supervisor.

The cooperation received from all sources was splendid. While it was, of course the major, in fact, the only extension activity of the Agricultural Engineering Department during the winter, I think everyone will admit that it was primarily a Michigan State College Extension show after it left the campus, and, that all departments participating secured value for any effort they put in. The distribution of requests for bulletins, summarized on another page, I think, proves that statement. The comment and suggestion most frequently made by the county agents, that there should have been more specialists with the Caravan, should by no means be considered as a criticism. It was simply a very natural development as the Caravan proved to be a much larger and effective "visual education" medium than most of us could foresee in the planning stages.

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Mimeographed by Extension Farm Labor Program, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.



Mr. Lowell Treaster did a splendid job of organizing the publicity for the caravan.

### Mechanics of Building and Organizing the Caravan

After the theme of "Rural Progress Caravan, Featuring Labor Saving," was decided upon the next step was to plan the best possible show in the limits of the time, money, and space available. Our experience over the previous 3 years with various types of meetings and demonstrations on farmer-made labor-saving tools and machines had convinced us that models and full-sized machines assembled in one place were very effective. During the winter of 1940-41 over 1,000 farmers came to two sweep rake meetings, at which several home-made rakes were brought in to highway garages and explained and demonstrated by the owners. The next year we elaborated a little and carried a few models and enlarged pictures on a two-wheel trailer to supplement local sweep rakes and elevators brought in by farmers. This clearly indicated the possibility of creating a lot of interest by building a large attractive show around this general idea.

The Rural Progress Caravan of '46 was more than a labor-saving show. Practically every department in the Agricultural Division on the campus contributed ideas which were shown by either models or panels, or both.

The basic plan of the show as organized was to use 6'6" x 4' panels, with legends, charts, or pictures set up around the outside walls of highway garages, high school gymnasiums, or similar buildings. The center space was used to show local exhibits, and the sixty some models were carried as part of the caravan.

The show and exhibit had to be very flexible and capable of variation from 80' x 200' highway garages to 40' x 60' high school gymnasium floors. This was accomplished by making each panel an individual unit, so the order and grouping could be set up to fit any space and floor arrangement.

Thirty "knock-down" display tables 18" x 4' were carried, on which the models were set, in front of the related panels. Usually the panels and tables were set around the outside walls of the building. In buildings less than 60' x 120' some panels were set in the center of the floor.

The panels, panel supports, braces, table tops, table legs, etc., were identical in size and interchangeable. This was necessary to allow speed in setting up and dismantling for loading. For the "managed milking" demonstration a platform 18" high, 4' wide, and 12' long, made in two sections, was provided. All talks and introductions were made from this platform. A public address system with two "mikes," one with an extension cord, and two speakers were used.

The Caravan was carried on two trucks, in the 8' x 12' bodies. On one a plywood body was built 11 feet high. On the other the 8-foot stakes were lined with plywood and had a tarp cover. The crew usually consisted of nine persons. Two truck drivers and one helper looked after the trucks, helped set up and load, and did the cleaning. Two agricultural engineers, one poultry specialist, one home economics specialist, and the assistant State emergency farm labor supervisor made the entire tour. One county EFL assistant helped demonstrate some of the agricultural engineering models. Specialists from other departments spent from a day to a week with the Caravan.



### Daily Programs

The Caravan was planned primarily as a "look show." There were no formal talks. Usually once in the forenoon and twice in the afternoon, the specialists were introduced from the platform. The home economics specialist put on three mending demonstrations each day, and a "managed milking" talk or demonstration was given three times daily. Usually the county agents would discuss the local exhibits and introduce the owner. The working models were kept operating most of the day, and people circulated around to the things that appealed to them, asking questions of the specialists.

The county agents set up an information booth, with a secretary in attendance. Check sheets were used for bulletin and plan requests.

On the whole, the mechanics of the Caravan worked out very well, and while it was not possible to do as much "housekeeping" and maintenance work as desirable while on the road, after 3,000 miles and 58 shows all but one of the models we started with were still operating.

The crew that stayed with the entire tour, from the truck drivers to Mrs. Shimkus, Mac Moore, and Jim Hays, deserves a very sincere tribute for making the tour successful.

Experience in conducting this Caravan taught us several things and suggested several improvements. The crew spent most evenings in discussing changes, improvements, etc., but for this particular show, wound up doing it over again just about the same way. Some of the suggestions made by the crew, while still on the road, are included with the conclusions and recommendations at the end of this report.

A complete file of all material used in organizing and conducting the Caravan is too bulky to include in this report, but is filed in the agricultural engineering extension office. This includes form letters, instructions to county agents, home demonstration comments, publicity material, floor plans of all buildings used in '46, and other notes which might be helpful in organizing another Caravan.

### RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As with most extension projects, it is difficult to set up any definite measuring stick as to results. Some indications are: The number of people reached and the requests made for plans or bulletins. These are summarized on the following pages.

Probably the most striking result of this project was the number of contacts made with Michigan farm folks, who ordinarily do not come to extension meetings, and the publicity it got for the college.

The Caravan provided some direct and valuable help to offset the labor and machinery shortage this year through all the suggestions of home-made labor-saving devices carried and the thinking it stimulated.

No check as to the total number of ideas already used can be made, but there is ample evidence that they will run into thousands. The county agent in Cheboygan County reported that five manure loaders had already been constructed in his county



directly as a result of ideas from the Caravan. Mr. Moore was told many times while the Caravan was still going, of community nests already made by someone who had attended. The home demonstration agent in Midland told of one kitchen remodeled and cupboards built from measurements taken at the Bay City Caravan show.

### Summary of Attendance and Bulletin Requests

Attendance: Total..... 90,175

The Caravan average attendance for 58 meetings was..... 1,555

It reached a large number of people not usually reached in extension work.

The bulletin requests proved that the interest created by the Caravan cut across all departments that participated (7,641 individual check sheets were filled out).

Bulletins distributed at the Caravan.....	17,000
Bulletins and plans requested.....	75,143
	<u>92,143</u>

### Bulletins Requested (by Departments)

<u>Department</u>	<u>Items listed on check sheet</u>	<u>Items requested</u>
Agricultural economics	1	627
Agricultural engineering	14	15,794
Animal Husbandry	5	4,398
Botany	1	695
Dairy	5	7,474
Emergency farm labor	13	7,332
Farm crops	3	2,385
Farm management	5	3,580
Forestry	1	1,086
Horticulture	3	3,219
Landscape	5	6,846
Poultry	9	8,948
Soils and soil conservation	3	2,607
Home economics	4	10,152
	<u>72 items</u>	<u>75,143</u>



### Comparison of Caravan Attendance With Other Extension Meetings

Several county agents have commented that the Caravan was large enough and spectacular enough to give them an extension show which could compete favorably with some of the commercial type of meetings.

While we would not imply that it is a fair measure of the effectiveness of extension efforts to compare the attendance at the Caravan with attendance at other extension meetings, such a comparison does indicate that this Caravan type of show helps to make contact with a large number of people not ordinarily reached.

Below is a comparative attendance summary taken from the county agent monthly reports. The detailed summary by counties is on file with the other Caravan material.

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Total of 51 county meetings participated in by county agents, including Caravan, January, February, and March.....	2,718	221,550
Caravan meetings.....	51	78,950
Meetings, exclusive of Caravan.....	2,667	142,600
Average attendance at Caravan.....		1,548
Average attendance at other meetings.....		54

### Caravan Publicity

One of the outstanding results of the Rural Progress Caravan was the tremendous volume of favorable college publicity it received.

Much of this publicity was unusual, and in channels not ordinarily reached by extension projects. As examples of that, we had two pages in the Detroit Sunday Free Press rotogravure section; the rotogravure sheet put out to 1-1/2 million people by the Goodyear Rubber Co. carried two pages of pictures; the Detroit Free Press "Town Crier" column carried a paragraph; radio station WJR of Detroit carried one program and gave the itinerary of the Caravan every morning for 3 months.

The publicity is summarized on the following page. The Emergency Farm Labor office has a complete clipping service file of State publicity.



# Summary of Publicity Given Rural Progress Caravan

<u>Medium</u>	<u>No. of items</u>	<u>Circulation</u>	<u>Estimated readers</u>
Michigan Farmer	1 story	150,000	300,000
Michigan Farmer	2 shorts (2 issues)	150,000	600,000
Goodyear rotogravure	1 story and 2 pages pictures	1,500,000	3,000,000
Detroit Sunday Free Press rotogravure	2 pages pictures	382,752	800,000
Detroit Free Press Town Crier	1 story	382,752	800,000
State and county papers Supplied by MSC publicity department (exclusive of county agents' local stories)	6 stories	2,400,000	14,400,000
Estimated total.....			19,900,000

The following out-of-State papers, to our knowledge, carried Caravan stories:

Minneapolis and St. Paul  
2 Chicago papers  
Farm Journal  
Better Farming Methods  
Agricultural Leaders' Digest  
Cappers' Farmer  
Extension Service Review  
National County Agent  
Boston paper  
Both AP and UP carried Caravan stories

## Radio:

WJR carried one 30-minute program plus "plug" every day from January 1 to April 1.

WKAR carried 3 Caravan programs plus "plug" every day for 3 months.

44 local stations were supplied weekly.

## Costs of Caravan

The costs involved in putting on a show of this size are summarized below. In terms of people reached, it proved a very economical medium of making extension contacts.



## I. Preparation

Materials for models and exhibits.....	\$1,423.62
85 display panels.....	1,000.00
Labor on models and preparation.....	875.00
Total cost of preparation.....	<u>\$3,298.62</u>

## II. Costs on road 1/

Traveling expenses (11 individuals).....	\$4,245.59
Salaries (7 individuals).....	2,930.44
	<u>\$7,176.03</u>

III. Publications.....	566.67
Total cost (including travel of regular specialists).....	<u>\$11,041.32</u>

IV. Cost per person reached.....	12.2 cents
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V. Cost per bulletin requested.....	11.9 cents
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Note: The original estimate of cost, submitted October 9, 1946 (which did not include travel expense of regular specialists) was \$9,365.

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1/ Traveling expenses include the following regular extension specialists:  
Amundson, Bell, Moore, Hays, Krause. Salaries do not include the salary of regular specialists.

## Public Reaction to the Caravan

An examination of the county agents' and home demonstration agents' reports indicates a general agreement on the value and effectiveness of the Caravan. Farmers' comments, follow-up publicity, and comments picked up by other extension workers indicate that it was very generally well received by the public. Both county extension workers and farmers generally seem to want, and more or less take it for granted, that there will be another Caravan. A complete copy of the county agricultural agents' and home demonstration agents' comments on the Caravan, taken from their monthly reports, is on file in the agricultural engineering extension office. The comments were universally very favorable.

## Some Recommendations for Future Plans

The committee, appointed by Director Baldwin, to make a brief report and evaluation of this year's Caravan and some recommendations, makes the following suggestions:

1. That a State-wide Caravan be conducted next year.
2. That definite arrangements be made for finances by July 1 this year.
3. That it be an "extension show" with one central theme.
4. That a small committee be appointed not later than July 1, to work with the extension administration to select a theme and develop plans, after canvassing all departments for suggestions.



5. That a Caravan director be appointed, responsible with the committee for preparing and conducting the show.
6. That the necessary allocation of time be allowed members, and especially the "director" of the "permanent" Caravan Committee to permit the proper planning and conducting of the Caravan.

The recommendations of the Caravan crew, made while still on the road, are filed with the other material. The committee, as requested, met with the department heads on May 11, and with the extension specialists on May 13. The report on the '46 Caravan and its results were favorably received by both groups.

The department heads passed a motion to the effect that favorable consideration should be given to a Caravan for 1947, and that the committee be invited to report later on future plans. Dean Anthony suggested that if Farmers' Week were not held in 1947, funds already budgeted for that purpose might be used to help finance a Caravan in 1947.

Possible themes for major interests for another Caravan:

1. The Home
2. Farm Structures (A national Project now)
3. Development of 4-H and Home Demonstration Work
4. Soils and Conservation
5. Land and Crops
6. Resorts--Farm Markets
7. Power and Its Use